

T W O  
S E R M O N S

Preach'd before the  
Condemn'd CRIMINALS,  
A T  
N E W G A T E, 1695.

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Rector of St. Michael Woodstreet, London.

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To the Right Reverend Father in God,

**H E N R Y**

Lord Bishop of *LONDON*.

M Y L O R D,



THESE Discourses are the immediate Effect of Your Lordship's tender Regard for the Miserable Objects they were directed to.

The sad and difficult Business of *Newgate* is a Task above the Labour of any One Person; and therefore Your Lordship's Charitable Appointment of some of Your Clergy carefully to Assist the Ordinary every Sessions, is an Act of the greatest Compassion, and will, without doubt, be readily obey'd: Neither was the Piety of the Civil Magistrate wanting in so good a Design; for, God be thanked, there was a direct Invitation, and the highest Encouragement from the late Lord-Mayor, Sir *Thomas Lane*, to the Performance of

it: And may it have an Influence on other Places of the like kind throughout the whole Nation.

They are Christians, tho Criminals, and tho that Authority which bears not the Sword in vain, is necessitated for the Terror of others to cut them off from the Land of the Living, yet it always allows an Interval between Sentence and Execution; and your Lordship's Interposition, in imitation of Him who came *to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, has taken all the Care imaginable to improve that Interval to the End intended; that they should not dye as they have liv'd, but that all possible means should be us'd, that their Souls may be sav'd *in the day of the Lord*.

'Tis upon this account I presume to put these Papers under Your Lordship's Patronage, as having the best Right and Title to the Dedication of them. *I am,*

MY LORD,

*Your Lordship's*

*Most Dutiful, most Devoted, and  
most Humble Servant,*

B. CROOKE.



A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Condemn'd Criminals, &c.

ACTS III. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted,  
that your sins may be blotted out.*



REAT and remarkable Objects of Misery ought sensibly to touch the breast of every Christian; for pity and compassion is the very Essence of Christianity:

And therefore surely it should turn our very Bowels within us, to see so many Per-

B

sons,

sons, some in the prime of their years, and all in perfect health, and the midst of their strength; to see so many able Bodies ready to drop into the Grave: But above all, it should stir up our utmost Commiseration, to consider so many Souls, for whom Christ died, (without his infinite interposing Goodness) just sinking into the Dwellings of Everlasting Misery.

And indeed sad is the State, deplorable the Condition you have brought yourselves to; adjudg'd by the Laws of your Countrey, and by them accounted unworthy any longer to live, unworthy to tread this Earth, or breathe this Air; and that no further good, no other benefit to Mankind can be expected from you, but only by the Example of your Death; and to stand like Marks on fatal Rocks, and Sands, to warn others from the same Ruin for the future. And may the Misery, and publick Shame you are expos'd to, make a better impression on others, than the

the like Punishment of others has made on you. For 'tis the aggravation of your Iniquities, that you have been full proof against Warnings of all kinds; not only the frequent Sufferings of others, for Crimes of the same nature, who were design'd for your examples, to the intent you should not have lusted after evil things as they also did; but doubtless, nay certain it is, that many of you have had a good Education, tender Mothers, that wept, and prayed for you; and careful Fathers and Masters, that kindly withstood you in your evil Courses; admonish'd you of your Duty to God, and often gave you that Advice which you then disdain'd, and thought irksome and uneasy to hear, but now remember, and with regret of Soul wish you had attentively listen'd unto, but all in vain; For because you then hated knowledge, and did not chase the fear of the Lord; because you refused counsel, and despised all manner of reproof, therefore you must now eat of the fruit of your own ways, and be fill'd with your own devices; for the

turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools will in the end destroy them.

And though your Circumstances are so truly lamentable, though the wickedness of your hearts has encompassed you about, and you are ready to fall into the pit, which by your Iniquities you have dug for your selves; though you are tied and bound with the chain of your sins, and are so fast in prison that you cannot get out, but to an evil and shameful Death; though, I say, your Condition is every way surely able to excite the utmost pity, and imploy our Eyes more than our Tongues, yet we come not here so much to bewaile, as to instruct you; and that your departure hence may not be to you the beginning of true sorrows, may not consign you over to a doleful Eternity, is the End and Design of this Discourse, by persuading you carefully to make use of the few remaining moments allotted to you, to lay them all out with the utmost of your power, in bring-

bringing, in forcing your selves to Repentance; that your past Offences, by the infinite Mercy of God on your short, but sincere Endeavours, may be done away; and the patient and humble Resignation of your Bodies to the Sufferings you have deserved, be accepted in Christ Jesus, and tend to the Salvation of your Souls: Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

In Discoursing on which Words, I shall (as I have a great deal of reason now to do) proceed with caution, pursue the best and safest method, and that, which in your distress'd Circumstances, appears most profitable for you; and that, I think, is this:

Left you should any way deceive your selves in this your great and last Concern, as to the nature or degree of that Repentance which God requires in order to eternal Salvation, I shall in the  
1st. Place.



1st. Place endeavour to detect and lay open to you, the many Errors and Mistakes men usually run into in relation to this Duty : And to every one of these I shall add an Application very suitable for you to lay to Heart.

2dly. I shall in plain and express terms shew you what the Duty of Repentance is, to which so valuable a Blessing as Forgiveness of Sins is annex'd ; and an infinite, unvaluable Blessing 'twould be to you, because without it you must in a very little time become Everlastingly Miserable. Of these in the order proposed.

And the first Error I shall take notice of, is not properly concerning the Nature, but the Original of Repentance ; from whence, or from whom it comes, but yet an Error of a very pernicious consequence.

For

For most People, at least the Actions of most, suppose Repentance to be purely and perfectly in their own power, and that they may begin it when they please; and therefore though it is daily offered unto them by Almighty God, and press'd on their Consciences by the good Motions of his Holy Spirit, yet they every day refuse it, and go on in gratifying their Lusts and evil Affections, and delay their Repentance from day to day, because they think that while Life lasts, they may take it up when they please.

But all this is downright delusion, and a wilful misapprehension of things of the greatest moment; for sure enough it is, that Repentance is not in our own power, but is merely a Gift of God; and such a Gift as may, and is often forfeited by an ungrateful rejecting and refusal of it; and God is the God of them that Repent, not only

only because he offers it to us, but because without his Grace we cannot effect it. We have ever since the Fall a backwardness in our Nature to all Good, and a readiness to all Evil; and without the immediate Assistance of Heaven, We can never cease from that evil, or learn to do that good; we can do nothing of our selves, 'tis God alone that enables us both to will and to do: His Grace indeed is sufficient for all things; but if we abuse that Grace, it may be taken from us, and never offer'd to us again; for there is abundance of truth in that known and ancient saying (which so nearly concerns you), That though Repentance be never too late before God when it is true, yet it seldom happens to be true when it is so very slow and late; and that God who has promised Pardon to the Penitent, has no where promised the Grace of Repentance to those that continually turn their backs upon it, and wilfully neglect the Opportunities of it.

This

This part of my Discourse then, is to beg you seriously to reflect on the fatal Exigences you are now involv'd in, by so long, and so ungratefully resisting the Grace of God; which, without that resistance, would have led you to Repentance; and to lose no part of your short time, but to cry aloud for that Repentance, and spare not; and do not expect cheaply to get that which you have so much undervalued and despised; but return unto the Lord your God with uninterrupted weeping, and fasting, and mourning; and rent your hearts, and turn unto him with all your hearts; and who knows but he too will then return and repent, and yet pour down the blessing of conversion upon you?

But idly. The next great Error that I shall mention is, when we take a part of the Duty, and a very small part too, for the whole: Thus most men resolve to believe it consists in a bare Sorrow and Remorse for Sin. But how  
C widely

widely does he mistake the true nature of Repentance, that thinks it only Grief and a self-reprehension for having done somewhat amiss? How unjustly, and without equity does he confine and imprison it? For if this were Repentance, we need not persuade men to it, 'tis impossible for them to forbear it, and there would always be just as many Penitents as Sinners.

For Actual Sin is such a shock and force on right Reason, such a contradiction to that inward standing Principle of Conscience, which Almighty God has Mercifully implanted in the breast of every Man, that as nothing but want of due consideration can be the parent of wickedness, or put us upon doing it; so on the least reflection afterwards, especially when our Sins have taken such hold upon us, that they have consign'd us over to Punishment, we must sensibly know, that 'tis an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the living God. We must of course,



course, and with grief wish our Sins un-committed, as naturally as the Mad-man does dislike the sad effects of his destructive fury when his fit of Frenzy is over, and the sober interval come.

And therefore now when you are just a going to reap the fruit of your past Iniquities, when the allurements of those Wickednesses, that brought you hither, have lost their Charms, and you see them as they are in themselves, and not under their former deceitful appearances, when the World and all things in it has thus discarded and flung you off; 'tis no wonder that in this case you should retire into your selves, and cast a Melancholy look both backwards, and forwards; backwards on the Actions of your past Life; and forward on your future Eternal condition, depending on those Actions; and with grief and sorrow, nay with bitter sighs and tears, reflect on what you have done amiss, and where you have dealt Wickedly; for this is as na-

tural as Rains and Storms in Winter, and without a frozen benumbed Superfession, 'tis impossible it should be otherwise.

What judgment then of a future condition can here be given? Who in such Circumstances (beside God himself) can separate or distinguish the acts of sincere Repentance, from the natural horror and anguish that does arise from Sin? Who can say this is Divine, this Human? This proceeds from a due sense of Sin, and ingratitude to a Merciful God, a Compassionate Redeemer, a Blessed Sanctifier, and not from the servile fear of approaching Punishment?

God knows it wounds my very Spirit within me, to speak these things to you, but 'tis for your Salvation that thus I speak; and therefore put not too great a confidence in your present sorrow, do not too speedily call it a sign or effect of Repentance, but try your selves to the

the utmost; and resolve to bring your selves to this frame of mind, that you would not only grieve, (which is nothing else but Passion) but be also active and willing to do any thing to gain your God; and that you would rather dye for your sins, than live in them. But Thirdly,

The next Mistake which I shall observe to you, lies in this; If to our grief and sorrow for sin, we add Promises of avoiding it; and to these join Resolutions of obedience for the future, then we are sure we are got into the very heart and center of Repentance, and that all the Benefits belonging to it, cannot, without much wrong, or injury, be denied us; but alas! the wrong is not done to the Man, but to the Vertue, if we assign it no larger a sphere to act in.

If indeed we leave Sin before temptation, and the opportunity of Sinning has left us; if we depart from Iniquity before it brings us to punishment, and *Christianly*  
fence:

fence our selves against it, by Vows and Promises, by Resolutions and Engagements to the contrary, this, I confess, looks as if we were in earnest with God and our own Souls; but yet even here, 'tis time only can tell us whether we are so or no: For as resolute as we appear now, our old Sins may in a little while get the dominion over us: 'Tis true, *God, who is the searcher of hearts, and the trier of the reins,* and who sees all things at once, which Men by degrees draw out into action; knows on what motive we go, at the very moment we resolve, and the strength or weakness of our Resolutions; but 'tis Time only can shew us to our selves.

Hence the Promises that are made when the fear of the *Grave* is upon us, and the *Righteous Tribunal* almost in our view, are justly liable to suspicion, and seldom last longer than the Occasion of them; and nothing is more ordinary, than to see the most Profligate Sinner, when under the apprehension of Death, very sorrowful

rowful for his past Sins, and making the highest Protestations, That if God would but spare him, he would become a new Creature; and yet to think that all who do this, go to Heaven, is certainly an Opinion the most destructive to *Practical Christianity* that can possibly be invented.

I doubt not, but you who have been so very solicitous to urge your Friends to mediate for your Pardons, have sometimes applied your selves to God, though, I'm afraid, not with the same fervour and concern; and, I believe, you have made many Vows of a better life, if life had been lengthen'd to you, but the date of that is almost run out; and therefore here you may behold the imminent danger of your Condition, in the impossibility that lies on you to know or try the sincerity of your hearts in the performance of this part of Repentance (for a part of Repentance I allow it to be). You may indeed make Resolutions, but you have not time to prove your selves as to the  
keeping,



keeping of them ; without which , all Resolution is nothing but Fallacy and Deceit ; nay , without question , your own Hearts can dictate terrible things to you on this account . Have not many of you made former Resolutions as strongly , to appearance , as you can do now ? and yet you have broke them ; and 'twas the breach of them that brought you hither : Believe not then your own selves too much ; trust not your Hearts , too apt to be deceived , and which have actually deceiv'd you heretofore in this very matter , but do every thing that shall be advis'd you , to take of all suspicion .

Freely give God the Glory , and ascribe your Detection and Punishment to the Eye of his Justice : Sincerely take shame to your selves , and candidly lay the cause of your Ruin at your own door ; make no trivial Excuses , alledge no Pretences , and leave not the least sting on your Consciences ; discharge them to the utmost ; and without any reserve ,  
do

do all the whole little you can toward making your peace with Heaven, and then you may the better believe your selves, and, in your Circumstances, have the best reason to believe your God in his abundant Mercy may accept of those Resolutions you unfeignedly make, instead of those Actions you have not time to perform.

And you will immediately, and without any artifice or disguise, close with this Advice, if attentive to the *Second General* now to be discours'd on; which is in plain and express terms to shew you *what the Duty of Repentance is*, to which so valuable a Blessing as Forgiveness of Sins is annexed, and an infinite, unvaluable Blessing it would be to you, because without it you must in a very short time become everlastingly miserable.

And here, not to raise false Schemes, the product of Presumption and deceitful Hopes, let us go to the Law and the  
D                      Prophets,

Prophets, to Christ and his Apostles, and there we shall be sure to find what true Repentance is.

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive, says the Prophet, Ezek. 18. 27.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesses and forsakes them, shall have mercy, says the Wiseman, Prov. 28. 13.

Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, says the Fore-runner of Christ, Matth. 3. 8. And Christ himself, Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire, Matth. 7. 19. To all which agrees his Apostle in the Text, Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. So that to turn away from sin, to forsake it, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, to repent, and be converted, are equivalent Terms, and mean the same thing in

in the style of the *Holy Scriptures*: And the reason that God himself, *Ezek. 18. 28.* gives for his pardoning a Sinner, is not because he grieves, or resolves, but because he considers, (that is, upon mature deliberation) turns away from the transgressions that he has committed.

From all which places (and a multitude of others to the same purpose) it will inevitably follow, That Repentance is the solid change of our Life; not a Recantation in words or Tears only, but a practical retracting our former evil ways, a leaving and forsaking our trade, and course of sinning, and living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world: Repentance is properly an habit, not a few doleful wishes of amendment, forc'd from us by the imminent danger our Sins have meritoriously plung'd us in.

For when our Iniquities, by a firm custom, are become familiar to us; and adopted into our very Temper; when we have for a long time given up our

selves into the full and intire possession of them, and acted them with all manner of greediness; tis unreasonable to suppose they can be conquer'd by a few single Acts, or fearful Resolutions of the mind; we may as well believe our selves capable of apprehending the most intricate, of doing the most difficult things at first sight; we may on as good grounds expect to remove a Chronical Distemper, and rear up all the Seeds of it, with one Dose of Physick; or at once to change the frame and turn of our Bodies, grown up with us, to move swiftly and regularly backward, or on a sudden to alter any other settled state or posture we have been accustom'd to from our Infancy, as to think our selves with careless speed, and ease, able to break down the strong-holds of Sin, or loose those perplext cords of Wickedness so often thrown about us. No, this must be the effect of much concern and thoughtfulness, of great struggling and contending, of fervent Prayers, and repeated Petitions to the Throne of  
Grace,



Grace, and we must exert the whole force and power of our Souls, before we can any way hope to accomplish it. And therefore no mistake has drawn a longer train of Evils with it, or produc'd more unhappy consequences to the Souls of men, than the common Opinion that possesses most Christians, and persuades them that Repentance is a sudden and momentary Act, which begins and is perfected on the Mind in an instant; 'tis this weakens every Argument for a Good life, and makes people leave all things of the other World, to the last periods of their abode in this, and then they usually call for help, and ask, *What they shall do to be saved?* "When in  
" their own Consciences they know they  
" can do scarce any thing at all; and then  
" must One come, and as they call it, speak  
" Comfortably to them; that is, Admi-  
" nister a little Divinity Stupefaction; which  
" like the intoxicating Potion given to the  
" *Jewish* Malefactors, will render them in-  
" sensible of their approaching Execution,  
" and of the Wrath that is to come. Whereas  
there

there is not the least ground for this fancy in Holy Scripture, but the direct contrary is there asserted to us. The Query here is not, Whether on a sudden or at the last hour, God can convert, or turn a Sinner from the *evil of his ways*; no doubt he can do that as easily as Create him at first; as we may see in the Quick Conversion of St. Paul, and Speedy Repentance of St. Peter (whose Sin was Unpremeditated and of little continuance, and therefore was the sooner atton'd for): But the main Question is, Whether this is the ordinary method of God in bringing us to Heaven; and that it is not, the whole stream and intrinsick design of the Gospel sufficiently declares. And methinks nothing can more plainly demonstrate this, than the consideration of what our Saviour lays down in the Fourth of St. Mark at the 26th, 27th, and 28th Verses, as a manifest description of the usual Operation of the Blessed Spirit of God on the Souls of men; *And he said, So is the Kingdom of God; as if a man should*  
cast

cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knows not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of her self, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, and then cometh the harvest. Where evident it is, That our Conversion from Sin to Holiness, our progress from Vice to Vertue, is no hasty headlong course, but a deliberate regular journey, passing from one stage to another, till we become perfect men in Christ Jesus.

The growth of our Mind in Goodness, is like that of the Body in Stature; imperceptible at first to those that daily look on, but in a little time apparent to all.

Our Saviour gives us the Knowledge of his ways, and Grace to walk in them; he sows the seed of his Word in our Hearts (the proper Soil for it) and then leaves it to our management, as the Husbandman does his Seed to the Ground; and if there be no defect in the Soil, if we permit

permit the good Word to fix in our Hearts, and add our Care and Industry to the Dews and Showers of the Holy Spirit, and the Warmth and Influences of Heaven, it will then *take root downward* and *bear fruit upward*, it will proceed from one degree to another; till the Crop kindly comes to full ripeness and perfection.

And therefore Christianity is often compared to a Walk, to denote Steadiness and a constant gradual Progress; and sometimes to Running, Fighting, and Striving, to urge our Zeal and Fervour in the Christian Course; but it never supposes unnatural Starts, a violent Transition, or a precipitate Turn from one thing to another; but Conviction always goes before Conversion, and is followed by a regular procedure from *strength to strength*, from *grace to grace*, till in due time we come to the *measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. And we have no instance, I think, in the whole Scripture to the contrary,

trary, unless you imagine that of St. Paul to be one, who, as himself affirms, *found mercy because he sinn'd through ignorance* : Or the Thief on the Cross, who is supposed by all to close with Christ at his first Call, and own him for his Saviour, when he saw him under the same Condemnation with himself, and derided or deserted by every one beside, even by his own Apostles. Neither of which is any thing near, but very sadly different from your Case, who have resisted a Thousand of his Calls, and known and own'd him *in Words, but in your works denied him.*

And now upon a short review of what has been said, we must First assert, That Repentance is not in our own Power, but is a Gift from God, which may be forfeited by an ungrateful rejecting, or refusal of it; And how often has he offer'd this Gift to every one of you? And how unkindly have you refused it? How then can you expect it again? Or

E                      should

Should he out of his unwearied pity, once more, in this needful time of trouble, vouchsafe to stretch it out to you, How should you with wonder and astonishment at his Mercy lay hold on it? And therefore whatever good Motions of Restitution, Confession, of giving God the Glory, or taking Shame on your selves; whatever Motions of this kind descend into your Hearts, stifle them not, as you have too long perniciously done, but receive them with gratitude, follow their guidance exactly, and look upon them as the last trial, the utmost effort of the Blessed Spirit for your Repentance and Salvation.

Secondly, We must affirm, That Repentance is more than a bare Sorrow for Sin; for 'tis often a meer natural effect of Misery to make men let go every false hold, lay down their Pride, drop their Security, and with Fear and Trembling come to a knowledge of themselves, and there may be little or no Religion in all.



all this; and therefore if any of you are without this least, this lowest mark of Penitence, 'tis the height of Stupidity; and let me with sorrow tell you, That a careless deportment in your Condition, argues a stiff Neck, an hard Heart, a fear'd Conscience, insensible of Wrath, and incapable of Mercy.

Thirdly, We must be forc'd to aver, That even Vows and Resolutions are only the beginnings of Repentance, and if not sincere, are not so much as that; for our Saviour came not to fright us into good Resolutions, but to convince us of the happiness, safety, and necessity of Goodness, the necessity of beginning it soon, lest we have not time to perfect it; and here therefore I must once more remind you of the Injury you have done your selves; you have cut off all possibility of knowing whether your Resolutions are sincere or no; nothing but time (ordinarily speaking) can shew that to any one but God; and your

own time, the thread of your life, you have abruptly broke asunder by the weight and violent course of your Sins; and therefore not only resolve, but faithfully do every thing to unweave the web of your Iniquities, to appease and reconcile your selves to your Offended Maker, ingenuously inquire *What you shall do to be sav'd?* and carefully follow Instruction, and think nothing to hard, that is maturely advis'd, you to approve the sincerity of your Resolutions.

Fourthly and Lastly. We must conclude that Repentance (the Condition of Eternal Salvation) is properly speaking, the solid change of our Life, not a Recantation in Words, or Tears, or Wishes only, but a practical retracting our former Evil Ways, and living *righteously, soberly and godly in this present world*; and if so (as without all peradventure so it is) to what a miserable uncertainty of Salvation are you then reduc'd;

duc'd ? for how can you be said to live a good Life, when you are just a dying ? How can you be said to finish your Christian Course, when you have scarce time to begin it ? You left not Sin, but Sin has left you (if it has indeed left you); for your Evil Desires (as far as we can judge) are not alter'd, or chang'd for the better; but are only beat down, and stunn'd at the approaching sight of Death; you cannot give any convincing Proof of your Enmity to Sin, or Obedience to God, you can only wish you had obey'd; and 'tis not good Wishes, but good Actions, that must carry us to Heaven: God forbid I should exclude you thence; and God forbid but I should tell you, That 'tis no easie matter, under your Circumstances, to get thither; the Way is narrow, and you have made it narrower by your Transgressions; the Gate is strait, and you have made it straiter; nay almost clos'd it up by the multitude of your Offences, and your obstinate continuance in them:  
And.

And therefore seek diligently, ask importunately, and knock without ceasing, that it may be opened unto you; do not too much fear Despair, but fear Presumption, and groundless Hopes of Future Happiness; willingly retain Sorrow and Anguish with you, they are the most decent Company for you to appear in; will do most good on others, and sooner lead you to Heaven, than the bold mistaken Pretences of Peace and Assurance: Exercise every Act of Humiliation. Be always conversant with your God, and always meditating on the odiousness of Sin, and the Sufferings of your Saviour for it. Lose no part of the short time allow'd you to prepare for Eternity.

Gratify no superfluous Bodily Desire, though never so innocent; eat the Bread, drink the Water of Affliction; wholly regard your better, your Immortal Part, and remember whatever the Condition of that is, your Body too must share in

in it ; and therefore spare no pains ,  
but kneel , and weep , and read , and  
watch , and fast , and pray , and use  
your utmost endeavours , that you may  
not enter into Eternal Condemnation.

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THE

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in it, and therefore spare no pains,  
but kneel, and weep, and read, and  
watch, and fast, and pray, and use  
your utmost endeavours, that you may  
not stand in Eternal Damnation.

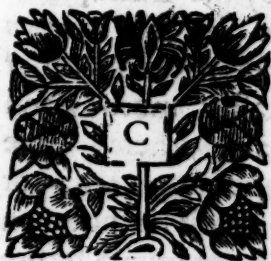
THE



THE  
SECOND SERMON.

MICAH III. 4.

*Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but  
he will not bear them; he will even  
hide his face from them at that time,  
as they have behav'd themselves ill  
in their doings.*



RUEL and hardhearted  
Man, ever most trea-  
cherous to himself, and  
willing to be deceiv'd  
in the greatest Concern;  
in order to it, would  
fain alter the Establish'd

Nature and Course of things: Expect Hap-  
piness, though he lives wickedly; he would

F disjoin

disjoin what God has always put together ;  
go on in Sin, and yet hope to avoid the sad  
Consequences of sinning.

The word of God plainly tells us, *That the end of sin is shame and destruction*, Phil. 3. 19. And yet many never thoroughly believe this, till they are beyond question convinc'd of the truth of it, till 'tis evidently prov'd on themselves ; and even then others believe it as little as they did before.

Had you that are now standing on the very brinks of Eternity, ready to be swept into it by the stroke of Justice, had you believ'd this sad truth, by the Example of others, you might have died the common death, and been visited with the visitation of all men. You might, after much good done to your selves, and others, have descended into the Grave in peace ; or would but many others credit it now on your account, they would not give a future Instance of it themselves : But we almost always fear and dread too late : Thus a  
timely.

timely rational fear of God, and his Judgments, had surely prevented all the Evils that have befallen you, when now you fear to dye, but know not how to avoid it; you dread the day of Recompences, but see it with full speed hasting towards you.

And there is no doubt but you have us'd all the Sollicitation of Friends; and, I hope, have apply'd your selves to God with greater earnestness than ever; but yet for all this, in respect of Temporal Judgment, there is no redress, no remedy, the neglected Truth of the Text is now made good upon you.

*Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them; he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.*

The sense of which words is twofold, either that of the *Old Testament*, and then it signifies the certainty of Tem-

poral Punishment; or that of the *New* (as we find it all along alluding to it) and then it means the Eternal Punishment due to Sinners for their obstinate continuance in Sin, in spite of all Warnings, all Admonitions to the contrary; and I will treat of these two promiscuously, and then separate them by the Practical Application I shall make, *first* to *You* that are by the Goodness of God, and your Superiors, mercifully withheld from the Punishment you have deserv'd: And then *secondly*, to *You* that are doom'd to dye, that you may behave your selves so; That though your Temporal Calamity be unavoidable, yet your God may not still cover the Eye of his Mercy from you, or be deaf to your Requests for pity on your poor Souls.

And if we look into the Holy Scriptures, we shall find frequent mention of an *acceptable time*, and of a *day of Salvation*, which we are earnestly advis'd on no account to let slip.

Thus

Thus says David to God, *Psal. 69. 13.*  
*I make my prayer unto thee in an acceptable time.* And thus says God himself, *Isa. 49. 8.*  
*In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in a day of salvation I have helped thee.* And hence came that passionate wish in the 18th. verse of the 48th. chap. *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.* And that seasonable exhortation in the 55th. chap. v. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near ; and to shew its direct aspect on particular Persons, as well as to a Nation in general, it immediately follows, Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Now this *acceptable time*, this season in which God may be found in Mercy, is very often in Scripture opposed to another

ther space of time, in which some of the Children of Men shall not be accepted, in which they shall not be succoured, at least from the Temporal Calamities they are under, though they never so piteously intreat for it, and in which God will not be found of them though they diligently seek him; this the *Psalmist* calls a time of the great water-floods, in which they shall not come near him; when the overflowing of Sin and wrath as a mighty stream and deep gulph shall interpose, and cut off all communication of Mercy between them and their God; thus again says God, *Isa. 1. 15.* *Though they call I will not answer; when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; and when you make many Prayers I will not hear; and the reason of this carriage of our Merciful God is most plainly and emphatically given in the Text, and is there set down as an act of just Retaliation towards us; Then shall they cry unto the Lord, and he will not hear them; he will even hide his face from them*



them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings: That is, though God may for some time seem to be slack, as some Men count slackness, though for a while he may seem to wink at the repeated Wickedness of ungrateful Mankind, and appear by his slowness to Punish, as if he never designed it; yet this at last will be found a sad mistake, and a time will come, in which he will surely repay the deeds of the obstinate wicked Person on his own head, and will then take example by him; and as he in the time of Sin shut his Eyes and clos'd his Ears to God, *and would have none of his Counsel*; so in the time of Punishment God will do the same to him. And 'twill not be an Objection of any weight to tell us, that these fore-cited places do not immediately relate to us Christians, but concern the Temporal Calamity of the *Jews*, and do denote that they had a time of Repentance, and turning to their God allow'd them, which if laps'd by their continuance in Sin, they would

would thereby foreclose themselves, and make the Sentence of their Calamity irreversible: I say, this will be no solution of the case in hand, but rather a downright denying of the truth; for we know that all things that relate to the Practice of Holiness, or the Punishment of Sin, all things of this kind that were written aforetime, were written for our Example; *Israel* after the Flesh, was a Type of *Israel* after the Spirit; that is, a Type of Christianity, and the Professors thereof; and their *Canaan* did prefigure those Mansions of Rest and Happiness prepar'd for us above: And therefore whatsoever did keep them out of that good Land, or cut them off from it, the same, proportionably, will cut us off from Heaven, and cast us into Hell; and this very thing throughout the 3d. and 4th. Chapters to the *Hebrews*, is all along urg'd; the parallel is exactly, and to a little carried on by the Apostle, and Inferences are continually drawn from thence; thus Unbelief or Disobedience, says St. Paul, kept them  
in

in the Wilderness, barr'd them out of Canaan, and made God swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest: And then it follows, Let us (us Christians) likewise fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. And what is point-blank to the purpose in hand, chap. 4. v. 7. Again he limiteth a certain day, saying, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; and then it follows v. 11. let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, (he means Heaven, the resting-Place of Christians) lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience or unbelief; and 2 Cor. 6. 1, 2. he quotes the very words of Isaiah, and directly applies them to the state of Christianity; We then as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith (speaking of God) I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation I have succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. So then to Christians there is a  
G time

time of Salvation, a certain prescrib'd time, in which their Repentance and sincere Endeavours of Obedience shall be accepted and crown'd with Success; and the opposite to this must be some other portion of time, in which these blessed advantages (being wilfully overslip'd) will not be again obtained: Some period of this nature there must be even to Christians, else the Apostle's comparison of the limited time, would not hold good, and his last-cited words would quite lose their Emphasis and Design, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

But what the particular admeasurement of these limits are, how far this *day of salvation* reaches, and when it will be clos'd and shut up by the approach of the unaccepted period, is hard distinctly to determine, and I am very willing now not to inquire into it, but will pass on to the practical Application designed.

And 1<sup>st</sup>. For you that by the Com-  
passion

passion of God and your Snperiors, are Mercifully withdrawn from the Condemnation you were under;

Remember, and always bear it in your Mind, That you have cryed unto the Lord and he has heard you; he has not hid his face from you at this time, though you have behaved your selves so very ill in your doings towards him.

Consider your selves as brands pluck'd out of the fire; and regard not so much your Bodies deliver'd from the Grave, as your Souls preserv'd from the neithermost Hell.

Look stedfastly back on the Danger you have escaped, and with Tears of Gratitude in your Eyes, stand amazed at the Patience, Long-suffering, and Forbearance of your God, not tir'd out by so many Iniquities; and repay it not with Falshood, and Perjury, but let such Gracious usage forcibly lead you to repentance.

You have, as the Psalmist says, been foolish people, plagu'd for your offence, and because of your wickedness; you have been fast bound in misery and Iron: You have for many days sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and been even hard at death's door.

And you have cryed unto the Lord in your trouble, and he has deliver'd you out of your distress: he has brought you out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke your bands asunder.

O that you would therefore praise the Lord for this his goodness, and declare the wonders that he has done for you: that you would offer unto him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out his works with gladness.

And to this purpose, make a careful distinction at this juncture, between Nature and Grace; between Passion, and the just sense of your Duty towards God. A joyful Surprise, a glad Astonishment at your Deliverance, may look agreeably well, and much like Gratitude,



titude; may throw you with extasie on your Knees, and make you run over all your former Resolutions; repeat, and vow them all again to indulgent Heaven, and yet this may be nothing but the effect of that warmth of Admiration, which such a sudden turn in your Affairs will naturally produce; and which without more solid fuel will soon again expire.

All the Motions of Wonder and Joy which seiz'd you at the first notice of your Reprieve, were Animal, and not Christian, (for Nature will exult at the unexpected Preservation of her self): But I would have you turn them all into the right Channel; Rejoice in the Lord; fear his Justice, and love and adore his Infinite Mercy towards you, and improve them directly to the End intended.

And you will do so, if you make this Act of Grace a new life to your Souls, as well as Bodies; if with a just abhorrence of your selves, and a design for the future to retract them,

them, you deliberately consider what were the beginnings of Wickedness, and by what progress you arriv'd to that height of Iniquity, that the Earth was scarce able any longer to bear you.

And if any of you are accounted unworthy to stay in the Land of your Nativity, carry not your old Crimes to New Climates, for God can find you out there, and punish you for your repeated abuse of Mercy.

Have always then in your minds the bitter Fruits of Sin; the servile Fear, Shame, and meanness of Spirit it betrays its Vornaries to; and the Temporal and Eternal Ruin that without Repentance will at length accompany it; and bear, and forbear, and do no more so wickedly. And since you have receiv'd such miserable Usage from Vice, with a just disdain forsake its Service, and for the future zealously ingage for Virtue, *against which there is no law.*

Call to mind the lost Profession of your  
Chri-

Christianity, the Grace of God, that heaps not Wrath and Misery on our heads, but brings salvation; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

The neglect of this Lesson has cost you dear, and the practising of it for the time to come, is the only true Return you can make to that Merciful God, who has deliver'd your Souls from death, your Eyes from tears, and now offers his Grace for the future, to keep your Feet from falling. Let the time past of your life therefore suffice to have wrought the lusts of your flesh; when you walk according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; for your Prayers are heard, and more days added to your Life, that you should no longer live

live the rest of your time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

There is mercy with God, says the Psalmist, that he may be feared; to be drawn by the cords of a man, to be won to our Duty, and melted down by loving-kindness, is what an ingenuous Temper can hardly withstand; but to continue in sin, because grace has abounded, is the mark of a base, abject Nature, fit for nothing but ruin; and therefore should you (forgetful of the Goodness extended towards you) abandon your present Safety, return to your old Sins, and by them be brought into the same condemnation again, your Behaviour, though never so dejected, and full of submission, will not be believ'd, will move no pity, will procure no commiseration, because of your renew'd false and perfidious dealings with God, and your own Souls.

And now I shall come to the last and most deplorable Portion of my Discourse, to speak particularly to you that are doom'd to dye,  
and

and to perswade you to endeavour to behave your selves so, that though your Temporal Calamity be unavoidable, yet your God may not still cover the Eye of his Mercy from you, or be deaf to your Requests for pity on your poor Souls.

And truly, I confess, I scarce know where to begin, or how to find out words mournful enough for your Condition. I am sure if you look into your own Consciences, every one of you can say, I well remember the time when thou, O God, wast near unto me by thy Grace, and the good Motions of thy Spirit; that Blessed Spirit which would have been a lamp unto my feet, and a lanthorn unto my path, if I had not ingratefully turned my back upon it. But not to aggravate that which is too heavy of it self, or fruitlessly lament, but compassionately to help you to regain the Assistance of that Blessed Spirit, so needful for you in your present Circumstances; I will (if the former part of my Discourse has fully bent your minds to good Counsel before it be evidently too late) endeavour to shew you a Glimpse of  
H Mercy;

Mercy ; tho after all my Wishes and Endeavours, I must acknowledge that there is but one *whole* Virtue you are now capable to practice, or so to practice as you your selves may judge of the Truth of it ; but yet 'tis a Virtue that will supply the place of a great many others ; and perhaps, by the Mercy of God, atone for the Breach of all the rest ; but if you willingly fail in this ( and next to the Grace of God it depends wholly on your Will ) I think you are undone for ever.

And this Virtue is *Sincerity* ; which abhors any evasive Arts or Shifts, which excludes all Hypocrisy, all Double dealing, all feign'd Pretences, or deceiving of God or your own Souls ; it admits no Mixture of Dissimulation, or sinister Aim, no relying on your own private deprav'd Judgments, but a ready unbiass'd Freedom of Mind to impart and lay open every thing plain and naked, to be judg'd of by those who sincerely desire to direct you to Heaven : And let me beseech you to yield to their advice, and  
trust.



trust those whose desire is the Salvation of your Souls, rather than those who have done all they can to destroy them.

And the Ground of this Virtue is Honesty of Heart, Uprightness of Intention; and God who searches the Heart, and sees into the closest Recesses there, knows when you act from this Inward Principle, and when not, and will certainly deal with you accordingly. And he that is scarce able to do any thing, and yet refuses to do the little he can, sullenly lies down in misery, and willingly accepts of his destruction.

But if this be not enough to say; as I know not what is enough to rescue you from the blindness and hardness of heart a long train of iniquity has involv'd you in; I will yet speak my mind more plainly to you (for your Circumstances will not admit Palliation or Delay) I know no way to Heaven for you, but by abundance of Remorse and Contrition; and that manifested to God, the World, and your own Consciences, by

Restitution to the utmost of your power; and a candid Confession, to prevent the like Evils to others, which have befallen you: And Repentance is scarce any thing else but Restitution, (join'd with a due Sorrow and Confession) a Restoring to God the lost Service of his Creature; a Restoring to our Wrong'd Countrey or Neighbours, what we have injuriously depriv'd them of; and a Restoring our Selves (by the Grace of God) to the first Dignity of our Nature, to the Purity and Holiness, which was that Image of God in which we were created.

And if you will not do this in part, in that part which you are able to do, 'tis folly to expect it in the whole; the whole you cannot perform, you have not time for it; a part you may do, and let me intreat you to do it freely, so freely, that you your selves may have a rational ground to suppose you would have done the whole, if you had time and space to effect it.

'Tis in vain, and beyond belief, to say you would

would do what now you can't, when you will not do what you can: I do allow you have resolv'd to live a good life, if you had been spar'd; but spar'd you are not, and therefore can never prove your selves as to this; but something you may do, and by it judge of all the rest: Restitution to the utmost of your power, and Confession to the Glory of God, and hindring the progress of Wickedness in others, is a necessary part of Repentance. This you can do, and if you refuse this, you would have certainly refus'd all the rest, if it had been left to your choice; you would in a little time have return'd to your old Sins in spite of the Resolutions which not a due sense of Sin, but your present Danger has extorted from you.

And, believe me, a Vow, or an Oath, for concealing a real Evil, is a Confederacy and League with Hell, and a Train of Satan to send others after you in the same pernicious Tract.

Humane Nature is sociable, and Friend-  
ship

ship is the life of Society; but a conjunction of ill Men, to ill Practices, is the destruction both of Society, and them that ingage in it; and nothing can in this Case free your Souls, but a generous Design and Desire to break the Infernal Combination, that you may be the last; that no more may be ruin'd by it as you have been.

And he that, tho late, yet does all he can to gain Christ, may not lose him; but he that in the very view of Death, prefers Shame, or Fear, or the love of Wickedness, or any other Passion before him, will never have him; and therefore say and do, restore and confess every thing necessary to unravel thy former Wicked Life, to take off the ill effects of thy Example, to disingage thy Companions from the Evils thou hast brought them into, or accompanied them in.

And let not the Spirit of slumber rest upon you, do not willingly stupify your selves, do not (now 'tis so very near) *put the evil day far off*, by endeavouring not to think of it,

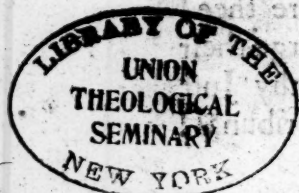
it, much less by diverting the thoughts thereof by anything really sinful, as Drink, vain Discourse, or evil Company; but rather employ the small remainder of your time to the best purposes, in continually prostrating your selves before the Throne of Mercy, in freely owning to all the Righteous Judgment of God upon you for your former Transgressions, and in making your Departure hence as profitable to the Souls of Men as possibly you can, by beating down all pernicious vain glorious thoughts of dying bravely, as an impious World expresses a stubborn and hardened demeanor; but with much Remorse and great Contrition, with exemplary Humility and Penitence, resolve to resign your Spirits into the hands of your Creator.

And, O Righteous God, how sincerely should they prepare! how cordially should they behave themselves, that in a few days are sure to appear before thee! how unfeignedly should they discharge their Consciences before they stand at thy Just Tribunal!



Tribunal! and willingly lay down every weight of Sin that has so long beset them, and which without laying down, will soon sink them into the Dwelling of Everlasting Misery.

But O Lord, thou Lover of Souls, who dost not desire the death, the utter destruction of thy sinful Creatures, but rather that they should turn from their sins and be sav'd: return thou, O Lord, and do not any longer hide thy face from them, when they spread forth their hands unto thee; assist them by thy Grace in this their extremity; make them willing and ready to be reconcil'd unto thee before they go hence and be no more seen; and then be thou fully reconcil'd unto them, for his sake, and through his Mediation, who came to Bear and Atone for the Sins of the World, thy beloved Son, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



F I N I S.



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